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spirit of the age, may indeed originate an audaciously brilliant and ingenious theory of the power that science may confer on Man—a theory that seems to raise him to the position of a god in one of the old mythologies. But by laying the stress on what Man can do, rather than on what Man is, such a theory really dishonors him, offering no further basis for a belief in “the reasonableness of the universe,” without which all speculation is materialism, gloss it over as one may. It leaves out of account “life, love and aspiration,” which alone ennoble existence in a universe, however grand its phenomena, or vast its extent, or perfect its harmony.

This contrast between the philosophy which contents itself with mere phenomena, and the philosophy which sees in man the greatest phenomenon of all, and pries into the secrets of existence, is as old as the ancients. Thus Seneca, as translated by quaint Thomas Lodge, writes to Lucilius of a broad spirit of research: “This is the more high and courageous; it giveth itself a larger scope, and not content with that which she discovereth by the eyes, suspecteth that there is somewhat more greater and more fairer, which Nature hath locked from our sight.”

ARTHUR REED KIMBALL.

THE AMERICAN COMMON SCHOOLS.

DANGERS threatening the common schools in this republic, arising from religious controversy, have from time to time appeared, and in most instances have been happily and successfully averted.

The principal assaults, and they have recently taken on great boldness, have been in the direction of demands for the division of the school fund on denominational lines, in order that systematic sectarian religious instruction might be given at the expense of the State. But these demands cannot be assented to without annihilating the common school system, and without the destruction of the conceded American principle of the complete separation of Church and State.

The legal status of the common school in each State, from both the secular and the religious standpoint, is dependent upon that State's constitution and legislative enactments. There are in these interests certain fundamental principles common to the entire country, certain uniform laws bearing upon the common-school system, giving it a kind of autonomy, and, so to speak, establishing a non partisan and unsectarian republic of letters within the body politic.

The people dividing as they will into religious sects, the individual interests of each sect must be advanced by its own effort and at its own cost. The common-school system uninterrupted and honestly worked has all the power necessary to the attainment of its conceded and legitimate purpose, and that is, to largely promote the well-being of the State through an intelligent and moral citizenship.

Deriving from the people the means for its support, it has legal authority and accountability and moral responsibility. Supported by all, and free to all, there must be nothing about it to which any unprejudiced citizen of the republic can rationally object, and each must use it so as not to interfere with the rights and duties of others.

The governmental power which assesses and collects taxes cannot be employed to promote or repress the interest of any secular or religious section of the citizenship, or for any purpose less than the impartial and highest good of all. Religious education belonging primarily to the family and

the Church, the State, guaranteeing religious liberty, permits all denominations who desire to do so to establish church schools, colleges, and seminaries at their own expense.

The State cannot oblige the Church to teach the rights and needs and duties of citizenship. This obligation involves both the rights of the child and of the State, and rests largely upon the parent. The State can compel the performance of this obligation and can secure these rights by the enactment and enforcement of compulsory laws, binding upon parents and guardians, as the condition of the free existence of civil and religious liberty. If the Church pretends in its schools to give the education that the State rightfully requires, then the State must know the fact by having supervisory access to these schools. When the limits of Church and State authority in matters of education are properly defined, in accord with the purpose and spirit of republican institutions, and when by each their normal and legitimate work is honestly performed, harmony will ensue. The American people will secure this result even if they are compelled to conquer a peace, and make that peace perpetual by constitutional entrenchments.

Compulsory education laws are presupposed in the right of a people to govern themselves. Such laws are only opposed in this country by those who would employ ecclesiastical compulsion to secure attendance on sectarian schools. We trust the day is not far distant when the scope of education which the State has right to require in its common schools will be definitely and uniformly determined, and the debate concerning the attitude of the State towards church schools and concerning the opposition to state schools and to compulsory laws and their enforcement will be ended. But in this debate the State will assuredly insist upon its right and duty to secure for its youthful citizens efficient elementary education, including the history and laws of the country.

Whenever this issue is raised, the great majority of our thoughtful, patriotic citizens will be found tenaciously adhering to substantially the following platform of purposes and principles concerning the American free common school system :

A knowledge of the exact situation by all intelligent citizens, all genuine Americans native born and naturalized, in every community, resolving themselves into a committee of the whole, to jealously watch and loyally guard these nurseries of our citizenship, and whenever they are assaulted conducting the defence without malice, without bigotry, without fear, without compromise.

An honest recognition of the commendable features of our school system.

An equally honest recognition of the defects, with willingness to learn from any and all other systems, which, in any of their features, may suggest needed improvements.

A readiness to face the patent defects, not attempting to cover but to courageously conquer them.

The best and most thorough instruction in every department, moral, mental, industrial, physical, placing the system by its preëminence out of the field of anything approaching general competition.

Insist upon the absolute necessity of the precedence and mastery of the National language.

Require the careful training of all the children and youth in the fundamental political doctrines and moral axioms and principles on which the free American government rests, as the only adequate method of securing that respect for the opinions and circumstances of others, readily inculcated in youth but difficult to acquire when character has been shaped and determined.

Let the people see to it that the practice of economy for political purposes does

not commence in any community with the schools, but provide without prodigality and with liberality, for both school buildings and school support.

Let no political, or ecclesiastical or atheistical outcry, from whatever source against religious instruction in the schools be the means of banishing a high morality from the character of the teaching or from the qualifications of the teacher. The American idea is that the school shall be a civil educator to make good citizens, and good citizens must possess moral character. The schools will inevitably be a reflex of the noble, cultured, moral characters of the instructors.

Banish absolutely all sectarianism from the management and teaching of these public schools, and all evidence of the structures used, or in the garb of teachers, that would suggest sectarian relationship, or hint at the remotest connection of Church and State.

Let National, State, county and municipal treasuries be jealously guarded against all attempts or pretexts for the division of the sacred funds which they hold for the support of common schools.

Let all partisan political control be banished from the management of the schools.

Let wise and fair compulsory education laws be speedily perfected and judiciously enforced.

Let all schools, where citizens are being trained for the performance of their duties as sovereigns in the republic, come under the intelligent supervision of the governmental authorities, as a rightful measure of safety, and as the only method of approximating that practical uniformity of results essential to popular education in a republic. One of the principal functions of the common school is to Americanize the children of foreign birth or parentage, and by its processes of digestion and assimilation make them a healthful part of the body politic. Thus only can the dangerously heterogeneous be made safely homogeneous.

The American flag ought to float over every public-school building in the republic while the schools are in session, as an object-lesson in patriotism for childhood and youth, and as a symbol to the world that we consider these buildings the fortresses of our strength, from which go forth the forces which are the best protectors of our free institutions.

JAMES M. KING,

*General Secretary, "The National League for
the Protection of American Institutions."*